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United for Quality Care

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Laura Nasser, PCA
Wallingford
District 1199 New England
Before the Labor Committee

In Support of SB 1178: AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS

Good evening Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez and members of the Committee, my name is Laura Nasser and I have been a PCA for 9 years. I live in Wallingford and I love my consumer. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 1178.

I am a caretaker at heart and I am lucky that I get paid to do what I love. It is satisfying to care for someone else's needs. There is nothing I don't do for him. I go grocery shopping, I take him to doctor appointments, I run errands, cook, clean, and assist with preparing for the day. He is in a wheelchair full time and I take a lot of pride in the fact that I can help him. It's important for me to be there or else he would not be able to take care of himself. He can't fully be independent without assistance. He even calls on me for help in off hours. I go in on off hours to help him and don't get paid for it. I do this because he needs the help. He gets nervous that he won't be able to get out of bed or eat without my help.

With no access to paid time off, health insurance and retirement, I am left to worry about being able to care for myself. When I get sick, I can't go to the doctor. I have to treat myself. I am late on my rent every month because it takes me two checks to pay it. If I miss a paycheck I am left to worry about how I would be able to survive without being able to pay my bills. Imagine if I had to take a few days off from work, it would leave me in a worse position than I am in. I have a very small studio for myself and I make just enough money to cover that. If there's anything that comes above, there's no other money to spare.

Fortunately we were able to win paid time off - up to 5 days - in our contracts last year, but the state has not created a system where we can actually get to use this time. Because of this, I am here today asking that you protect long-term care workers by supporting SB 1178, and include us in the paid sick time laws we need. We need a system to use what we fought hard for, this is our right as PCAs.

Thank you for your time.